



March 2015  
Volume 3, Issue 3

Writers of Kern  
PO BOX 22335  
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## March Speaker, Nancy Curteman, Reveals Tension-Building Techniques



How do  
you write  
the story  
your  
readers  
can't put  
down?

WOK's March speaker and novelist, Nancy Curteman, knows the answer to that question is tension. So her talk, "How To Increase Tension in Your Novel," reveals the key components behind every page-turner.

After this interactive presentation, you'll know just what story tension is, how to wield crisis and conflict to increase tension, and methods for injecting tension into story drama. You'll leave with such specific and in-depth tension-building techniques for your stories as: dialogue, subtext, nature, friction between characters, and dramatic revelations.

Nancy Curteman is an award-winning novelist with a number of mystery novels under Solstice Publishing. She serves on the board of the California Writers Club. Her fifth novel, *Murder on the Seine*, came out in November.

Find out more about her and her novels at [nancycurteman.com](http://nancycurteman.com).



Mandy Wallace

*The Write Way* is published monthly in Bakersfield, California. The deadline for submission of news articles is the first day of the month of publication. Send to [newsletter@writersofkern.com](mailto:newsletter@writersofkern.com)



The Writers of Kern website seeks and welcomes submissions of members' writing for the website blog. Prose, memoir, poetry, essays, and book reviews should be sent to [submissions@writersofkern.com](mailto:submissions@writersofkern.com)

**WOK Spring Conference**  
*A chance to hit GOLD*



Register Now  
[www.writersofkern.com/events](http://www.writersofkern.com/events)

## President's Message Spring Forward!



The next three months are bloomin' with activities, each carefully

prepared to produce an abundance of encouragement. This month we are honored to host guest speaker Nancy Curteman who will cultivate your writing skills.

April 25 brings our Spring Conference and four great speakers to help you replenish your writing reservoir. And May 16 is our annual members' dinner, purposely renamed "WOK Honors" to celebrate the bounty of talent and commitment in our community. We'll give awards to many deserving recipients – from the student-writer winners of the Young Writers of Kern competition, to the Peggy Connelly scholarship recipients. Plus, we'll present a special recognition pin to all current, active members. Watch for registration info coming soon.

This is an exciting time to be a part of Writers of Kern. We plan every event with *you* in mind, WOK-ing with *you* from Inspiration to Publication, to honoring *your* commitment to WOK and to your writing.

Make sure you attend our March 21 meeting and are registered for both the Spring Conference and the WOK Honors dinner. Just like rain on newly planted seeds, these events will grow your writing and help you flourish.

I look forward to seeing you at each upcoming event.

~ Joan

## Highlights of February Speaker LeeAnne Krusemark

LeeAnne Krusemark spoke to a full house at our last Writers of Kern meeting.



As a successful published author, she tested our query letter acumen. We had a couple of practice sessions in which we were to write pithy and provocative attention getting query letters. Even the most seasoned writers must perfect this skill.



Her talk entitled, "How to Write an Irresistible Query Letter" gave the audience a challenge: In your first sentence or two, grab the attention of a besieged agent or editor to spend three minutes reading your query letter. Then, if he or she gets past the first sentences, explain why your treatment of the work is unique and also explain why you are the most credible person to write about it. Then convince him or her that your readership already exists and is a bestseller for your targeted audience who are just

waiting for immediate publication.

Ms. Krusemark also advised, "It does not hurt to do a background research on the agent, editor or publishing house and know the name of the person to whom you are sending your letter. It is imperative that you know the publisher's guidelines and follow them "to the letter." Learn what they want and need. Address the letter to the name of the editor/agent and be sure to sign it.

Pertinent experience and publishing history establish your credibility at the high and low ends of the scale. "Market yourself" by using your creative skills as a writer and show your accomplishments in the best light without being too personal.



**Kathleen Ellis Faulkner**

See more photos  
at <http://writersofkern.com/photo-gallery>

## WOKians Getting Ink

Two ag-related articles by **Lou Medina** appeared in the Feb/Mar issue of the Kern Business Journal: "Part-time worker finds all the right, healthy food choices for CAPK Food Bank," and "Childcare program stimulates economy by allowing migrant parents to work in agriculture."

Lou also had an article in the March issue of *Bakersfield Life Magazine*, The Last Word. His story, "Taking Action for the

Community,” chronicled the history of Community Action Partnership of Kern.

Five Writers of Kern members are featured on the Southern California Writers Showcase website:

**Dan McGuire** for his memoir piece, “Warm Water.”

<http://www.socalwritersshowcase.com/warm-water/>

WOK 100-Word Story Challenge entries appear in Short Fiction and in Non-fiction/Essay sections.

**Terry Redman**, “The Ghost at Bakersfield High.”

<http://www.socalwritersshowcase.com/the-ghost-at-bakersfield-high/>

**Karen Sallee**, “Jerky Johnson Kills a B’ar”

<http://www.socalwritersshowcase.com/jerky-johnson-kills-a-bar/>

**Kathleen Ellis Faulkner**, “Desperation on Call”

<http://www.socalwritersshowcase.com/desperation-on-call/>

**Renee Geffken**, “Ming”  
<http://www.socalwritersshowcase.com/ming/>

**Donnée Padgett’s** *Prohibited 2: Illicit Affairs* was released on Amazon.com. “Michael and Maxine are back and life is still just as crazy and just as painful as before.”

## ***New WOK Members***

A big Writers of Kern welcome to new members, **Debbie Spohn**, **Phyllis Wachob** (mystery/thriller, non-fiction), **David Kettler** (nonfiction, poetry), and **Alice Flynn** (fiction), who joined last month.



## ***You May be Shot***

Photos will be taken for Writers of Kern recorded history, social media, websites, or publicity. If you object to being present in a photographic environment, we will refund your entry charge, and you can remove yourself from the meeting.

Writers of Kern has no control over members or guests taking photos that may appear on social media. We are not responsible for anyone else’s photos or actions during any Writers of Kern meeting or event.

## **“From Inspiration to Publication”**

### ***Writers of Kern Calendar***

**March 21, 2015**

Nancy Curteman, Mystery Writer  
“How to Increase Tension in Your Novel”

**April 25, 2015**

**WOK Annual Spring Conference**  
**8:30 AM to 3 PM**  
Featured Speakers:  
David Congalton  
Toni Lopopolo  
Allison Crotzer-Kimmel  
Herb Benham

**May 16, 2015**

**WOK Honors Dinner**  
Hodel’s 6:00 PM

Young Writers of Kern Competition  
Peggy Connelly Scholarship  
Pinning Active WOKians

**June 20, 2015**

Victoria Zackheim  
“Writing the Personal Essay”

**July 18, 2015**

Judy Salamacha  
“A Novel Way to Write a History Book”



***NEW MONTHLY MEETING ENTRY FEE***



***NOW \$5 for WOK MEMBERS***  
***Pay ahead online or at the door.***

## ***Peggy Connelly Scholarship***



A competitive field of students from both Bakersfield College and Taft College applied

for the two \$1,000 Peggy Connelly Scholarships that WOK has funded. Applicants must now write and submit a piece, fiction or non-fiction, based on a photo prompt that the scholarship committee chose. The submission deadline is March 15.

In the next phase, the scholarship committee, Annis Cassells, Terry Redman, Janet Skibinski, and Dennis VanderWerff, will read the entries and evaluate them according to an established rubric. The winners will be announced and honored at the WOK Honors Dinner on May 16.

In accordance with our mission to encourage and support aspiring writers, it's necessary for Writers of Kern to regenerate the scholarship fund each year. We encourage you support the Peggy Connelly Scholarship Fund with your tax-deductible donations.

Opportunity Bag tickets will still be available for purchase at monthly meetings. All proceeds go to the scholarship fund.

Thank you for your support of this worthy cause.

## ***Events and Classes*** **Festival of Books**

The 20<sup>th</sup> Los Angeles Times Festival of Books runs April 18–

19 on the campus of USC. Admission is free, and there will be music, food, art, and culture in addition to numerous authors and other book people. To learn more, see <http://events.latimes.com/festivalofbooks/>. See the LATimes in mid-March for a list of featured authors and celebrities. (Editor's note: Though free, some events and author presentations require tickets. Check the paper for that information. Plan to go early.)

## **Tri-Valley Writers Conference** **Focus: Self-Publishing, Marketing, Craft**

Saturday, April 18, 2015, all day, at Four Points by Sheraton, 5115 Hopyard Road, Pleasanton, CA 94588. \$165 for CWC members, \$190 for non-members.

Sponsored by the Tri-Valley Writers Branch of the CWC, this conference is a full day event on the art and business of writing for writers. The speaker lineup includes authors, editors, marketing experts, and innovators in e-publishing.

Visit

<http://www.trivalleywriters.org/conferences/2015-conference/>

## **How To Write Your Novel In Two Weeks!**

Saturday, March 28, 2015  
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM  
Los Gatos Adult Recreation  
Center

Discover techniques to write fast and get your first draft written in two weeks. Learn how to prepare

for the two-week event, how to execute during the two weeks, and how to fine-tune your masterpiece. For beginners or pros, this is an exciting and motivating workshop that will help you improve your storytelling skills. Don't waste years trying to get your novel written. Learn secrets to avoiding writer's block and write your novel once and for all! FMI or to register: <http://www.lgsrecreation.org> or call (408) 354-8700

## **Official WOK Email Addresses**

**Go to the website, or  
email to the following  
addresses. Thank you.**

### **Events:**

[events@writersofkern.com](mailto:events@writersofkern.com)

### **Information:**

[info@writersofkern.com](mailto:info@writersofkern.com)

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[membership@writersofkern.com](mailto:membership@writersofkern.com)

### **Newsletter:**

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### **Submissions:**

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### **Webmaster:**

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### **Critique Coordinator:**

[critiques@writersofkern.com](mailto:critiques@writersofkern.com)

## ***Kern County Challenge 100-Word Stories***

Submitting a dozen stories, Writers of Kern stepped up to the Kern County Challenge thrown down by Donna McCrohan Rosenthal of the SoCal Writers Showcase. This month, **TWW** presents six entries.

### ***The Sign***

by **Mikie DeLong Pyle**



1951. Her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. They meet. She, with friends. He, with Army buddies, Korea-bound.

He smiles. Her heart opens. They talk. Dance. Kiss.

He says he's engaged. Her heart shuts.

He says, "Let's meet 50 years from today at noon under the Bakersfield sign."

They part. She lives a life. She never forgets him.

2001. Her 71st birthday. Widowed now, she remembers. Frets. The sign: Relocated! She arrives at the original spot. An elderly gent stands below where the sign once stood. He lifts up a homemade poster that reads, "The Bakersfield Sign." Sees her. Smiles. Her heart opens.

### ***Daddy!***

by **Bob Weiss**



"Daddy! Daddy!" My young daughter called out.

"What?"

"I found some gold behind a rock."

I had heard of people finding gold in the Kern River, but I doubted if my daughter was one of them.

I hurried to her and looked at the small yellowish colored pebble in her hand.

Hmm, was it really gold?

"Probably fool's gold," I muttered.

"No Daddy, Uncle Art told me where to look for gold...behind a rock. That's where I found it."

Still doubting, we nevertheless broke camp early, drove to an assay office, hurried to the front door, and with trepidation, entered...

### ***The Ghost at Bakersfield High***

by **Terry Redman**

They say late at night a ghost roams Bakersfield High's Harvey Auditorium. Is he really there or just a legend? *Is he The Spirit of Bakersfield High?*

BHS archivist Ken Hooper told me, "We think he was a student who died in WWII and came back." Now there's story waiting to be told. "A lot of people have heard him over the years."

Does he watch rehearsals, the girls changing costumes, or someone playing the role he wanted?

Waiting for what, for whom? "Once a Driller, Always a Driller!" (BHS motto) Spooky, but still I'd like to see him.



***In the Fog***  
by **Wanda Winkler**

I stumbled in the darkness while walking between a headstone and a white marble statue. Heavy mist clung to the ground, and then I saw them, two orbs hovering over a grave. As I ran in their direction, the air became increasingly cold. The grave of Col. Baker is where the orbs disappeared.

“Please stay with the group,” said the curator, “we still have the graves of Benjamin Brundage, George Chester, and Solomon Jewett before we get to our town’s founder, Col. Thomas Baker. I am glad you’re enjoying our Annual Midnight Halloween Tour here at the Historic Union Cemetery.”



***Bakersfield, California, Earthquake, 4:52 AM, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1952.***

by **Kelsie Gates**



A speeding sedan- sweeps around the mountain curve- headlights stab into the red fog ahead-

Three sailors- on their way back to base- two asleep- the driver- half alert-

Slowing- the car crawled forward- nosed into the red fog- instantly becoming deluged by falling rocks- dirt clods-clouds of dust-

South two lanes- buried- covered by the sliding mountain- the driver swerves around many boulders-

Into the far northbound two lane road- panic grips the driver- the car clear-accelerates forward- swerves- barely misses- three stopped cars- headed north-

The last car through- safe-

***Desperation on Call***

by **Kathleen Faulkner**



The slapping cacophony of helicopter blades and the circulating blinding beams of lights that revisit Cottonwood Road, bring hope or fear that soon dissolves into the blackness of the night.

Then, dark figures emerge and gather under the dim streetlights where they always congregate.

Then the “man” with his stash of hopelessness and death appears to assist the already dying from their misery.

A glint of a handgun terrifies a child hurrying to his empty home for safety only to find little love and comfort in his empty cold house.

Does it matter?

Someone cares: Is it you, or the “man”?

## Member Bio ~ Meet Renee Geffken



Renee, who lives in Porterville, recently became a member of WOK and greatly enjoys being with her ‘own kind.’

A part-time writer for many years, Renee has recently retired from the medical field. Her last position was case manager for individuals with intellectual disabilities. She’s been married to Dave Geffken, a retired psychiatric technician and contented full-time musician. They are proud parents to Karmen and Lorna, both of whom are attending college. Renee’s 100-word Flash Fiction story, “Ming,” was based on Lorna.

As a volunteer at the animal shelter in Porterville for several years, she assisted the shelter administrator, held dog adoptions, and wrote local newspaper articles. For several months, she produced a bimonthly newspaper insert.

A self-published author, Renee wrote a short story, **ROCKET 66**, to raise money for her local animal shelter. **ROCKET 66** is about euthanasia, and because it’s a tough story to read, Renee has pursued numerous organizations to sponsor **ROCKET 66** as an instructional tool. She hopes it will teach people to be socially responsible pet owners by spaying/neutering and microchipping their pets.

Renee is finishing a Baby Boomer short story, which she plans to self-publish digitally. She’s also in the middle of a children’s story. No surprise. It’s about getting a dog from the animal shelter.

**Why Not?** a novel Renee self-published, is written under her alias R. Greene due to its mature content. She chose self-publishing after discussions with other series writers revealed publishers may make major revisions to a novel. **Why Not?** is the first of ten volumes of the *Miles and Mel Series*. Currently, Renee is working on the rewrite of volume two, which is titled **More**.

To contact Renee, email her at [geffken.r@gmail.com](mailto:geffken.r@gmail.com). To read the first nine pages of **ROCKET 66**, log on to [www.reneegeffken.com](http://www.reneegeffken.com). To purchase “**Why Not?**” by R. Greene, log onto [www.milesandmel.com](http://www.milesandmel.com).



### Writers of Kern Authors

Five more spots available for authors at the Book Sales Table at the Spring Conference. Sign up at the March 21<sup>st</sup> meeting or contact [president@writersofkern.com](mailto:president@writersofkern.com).

## *The Pod is Cast* *by richsopus*



What is a podcast?

A digital audio file made available on the Internet for downloading to a computer or portable media player typically available as a series. Subscribers can sign up to automatically receive new installments.

I'm recommending some writing podcasts I've found to be instructive and entertaining. They're also free!

### 1. Writing Excuses

Motto: 15 minutes long because you're in a hurry and we're not that smart

Writing Excuses is a fast-paced weekly podcast that covers topics related to writing genre fiction. It's presented by Brandon Sanderson, Dan Wells, Mary Robinette Kowal and Howard Tayler. In a recent episode the hosts discuss the popular notion that writing short stories is a good way to practice for writing novels, and whether selling short stories is a good way to raise an author's profile to sell a novel. Website: <http://www.writingexcuses.com>

### 2. The Creative Penn

Motto: Helping you write, publish and market your book

Put out by author Joanna Penn, it features interviews with authors, marketers, and pretty much anyone who has a thing to do with publishing and writing. While this podcast can ramble a bit, the variety and content make it worth it. (Plus you can jump ahead.)

Website: [www.thecreativepenn.com](http://www.thecreativepenn.com)

### 3. Grammar Girl

Motto: Quick and dirty tips for better writing

Brush up on your grammar in short and sweet segments. If you've ever Googled anything grammar related, this site has probably popped up on the first page of results. Something I've learned from their podcasts: "burnt" is typically British, and "burned" is typically American.

Website: <http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com>

### 4. The Creative Writer's Toolbelt

Novelist and writing tutor Andrew J. Chamberlain gives practical, accessible advice to creative writers. Each episode explores an aspect of creative writing technique, with examples, allowing you to immediately apply what you learn. Chamberlain also throws in interviews with writers and other artists, exploring their wisdom on subjects like story, style, character and the writing process. Website: <http://ajc-cwt-001.podomatic.com>

### 5. Firsts in Fiction

Firsts in Fiction is a weekly podcast by aspiring writer Steve McLain and author Aaron Gansky who dissect elements of fiction writing. If you've ever wondered how to create memorable characters, unforgettable plots, or emotionally powerful prose, this is the podcast for you. Website: [http://aarongansky.com/firsts\\_in\\_fiction\\_podcast/](http://aarongansky.com/firsts_in_fiction_podcast/)



WRITERS OF KERN ANNUAL SPRING WRITING CONFERENCE  
 APRIL 25, 2015  
 CLARION HOTEL AT 3540 ROSEDALE HWY, BAKERSFIELD

- 8:30 - 9:00** Sign-in, Social Time, Snacks
- 9:00 - 9:15** Welcome. Writers of Kern President, Joan Raymond
- All day** Door prizes, book sales and signings, networking, a cornucopia of learning opportunities



**9:15-10:15 -- DAVID CONGALTON, Author, Screenwriter - "The Writer's Journey: Rules of the Road"** No two routes on writers' journeys are ever the same, but the experienced writer understands that a good map, a clear sense of destination, and knowing when to ask for direction can often determine creative success or failure. Learn some basic rules of the road and how to apply them to your own writing.

*David Congalton is a screenwriter, nonfiction author, freelance writer and radio talk show host. His first movie Authors Anonymous was released last April. A second film, Seven Sisters, is in production.*



**10:35-11:35 -- TONI LOPOPOLO, Editor, Agent - "Mastering Editing Skills"**  
 Techniques that help the writer learn the all important skill of self-editing: Avoid The 10 Most Common Mistakes First Novelists Make. Insights you've not heard before from an agent or an editor.

*Toni Lopopolo worked 20 years in New York publishing, from Bantam Books to executive editor at Macmillan and St Martin's Press, before opening her literary management company in 1991. She conducts a popular workshop, Tea With Toni, for writing fiction and narrative non-fiction.*

**11:40-12:30 LUNCH**



**12:35-1:35 -- ALLISON CROTZER KIMMEL, Middle Grade Author - "Finding Your Fiction: Building Blocks of a Great Story"**

This workshop takes writers through the essential parts of crafting a quality story with exercises devoted to strengthening characters, creating setting, building plot, and finding theme.

*Allison Crotzler Kimmel published her first Middle Grade non-fiction book January 2014 with Capstone and has two additional titles coming out this spring. A former teacher, she now serves as the SCBWI Kern County regional advisor.*



**1:55-2:40 -- HERB BENHAM, Columnist - "That was Easy"**

Favorite stories through the years, the great people I've met, the balancing act of writing about one's family, and some "million dollar"-writing writing tips.

*Herb Benham has been writing columns for almost 30 years for the Bakersfield Californian. "I've written probably close to 5,000 columns. The hope is that one day I might get it right." Most recently, he's published That Was Easy, his third book of collected columns.*

**2:45-3:00 Wrap-up & Acknowledgements**

**EARLY REGISTRATION: February 1 - 28, 2015: \$35 for WOK/CWC members, \$40 for non-members, \$25 for students 14-22. REGULAR REGISTRATION: Begins March 1 until Sold Out: \$50 for members/non-members, \$25 for students. Catered box lunch by Sequoia Sandwich Company, add \$5.00. Seating is limited - Register today at [www.writersofkern.com](http://www.writersofkern.com)**



## ***National Poetry Month April 2015***

“Inaugurated by the Academy of American Poets in 1996, National Poetry Month, held every April, is the largest literary celebration in the world with schools, publishers, libraries, booksellers, and poets celebrating poetry’s vital place in our culture.” (from the website at <http://www.poets.org/national-poetry-month/home>)

### ***Bakersfield Events***

National Poetry Month is alive and thriving in Bakersfield. After a successful 2014 celebration, local poets and WOK members, **Portia Choi** and **Nancy Edwards**, have come up with another stunning month-long poetry fest. Take part and enjoy while supporting our local poets.

#### **Poetry Open Mic featuring Lisa Ann Lobasso**

April 3 (Friday 6:00 pm-7:00 pm)

#### **Dagny’s Coffee**

1600 – 20th (Corner of 20th and Eye St), Bakersfield 93301.

### **KICK OFF**

#### **Valley Life: Poetry About Our Community**

April 9 (Thursday 7:00 pm-8:00 pm)

#### **Levan Center for the Humanities**

1801 Panorama Drive, Bakersfield, CA 93305

#### **Feel, Heal, Write Poems: a Workshop** by Portia Choi

April 18, Saturday 1:30 pm-4:00 pm

#### **Art and Spirituality Center**

Dignity Health, Mercy & Memorial Hospitals  
2215 Truxtun Avenue, Bakersfield, CA 93301



#### **CSUB Presents a Reading by Local Poets**

April 21, Tuesday at 7:00 p.m-8:00 pm.

Selected poets from Bakersfield reading their poetry.

#### **Dezember Room of Stiern Library**, California State University at Bakersfield.

9001 Stockdale Hwy, Bakersfield, CA 93311

#### **Celebration of Poetry/Jazz Month**

April 26, Sunday at 2:00 pm.

Featuring local poet Tony O’Brien and Bakersfield’s best Jazz musicians.

#### **Center for Spiritual Living**

222 Eureka Street, Bakersfield, CA 93305

*“Donations Accepted”*

#### **Reading by Acclaimed Poet Joseph Lease**

April 30, Thursday 11:10 am-12:10 pm

#### **Taft College, Cougar Room**

29 Cougar Court, Taft CA 93268

Information contact Portia Choi at (661) 717-1346 or [ssportia@aol.com](mailto:ssportia@aol.com)

# ***THE BACK PAGE***

## ***Guilty of SWOKP***

### **Shameless Writers of Kern Promotion**

Yep, I'm guilty.

We've all heard of Shameless Self Promotion (SSP), maybe have endured conversations or meetings in which someone persisted in selling himself.



As I departed a recent discussion group gathering, I realized that I'd indulged in shamelessly promoting Writers of Kern. Somehow, the pre-meeting chit chat led me to ask the small group, "Does anyone write?"

Most protested, "Oh, no." or "Not me." But, one woman said, "A little." And that was all it took. The next thing I knew, we'd stepped aside and I related the rewards of belonging to this great writing club -- along with the Monthly Meeting information and website address.

Then, there was the author signing his books in the Stockdale/Gosford Albertson's early this month. "Hi," I said and introduced myself. "Are you familiar with Writers of Kern?"

Surprise registered on his face, "Why, uh, no."

"Well, let me tell you. We are a local professional writing club, a branch of the CWC..." You all can guess the rest.

I invited both the new friend and the just-met author to the March 21 meeting. Wouldn't it be wonderful if they show up? With the number new folks joining this year, our club is experiencing a growth spurt. We're getting bigger and stronger, reaching further. That's exciting news for Bakersfield's writing community. And for all of us as we can benefit from an abundance of ideas and encounters.

Shameless WOK Promotion. No. I am not ashamed. It feels right.

A large, light green ribbon graphic with a black outline, shaped like a wide 'X' with a central rectangular box. Inside the box, the text reads: "AVAILABLE SOON", "Editorial position with your Favorite CWC Branch newsletter", "*The Write Way*", and "newsletter@writersofkern.com". Below the ribbon are four small green clover icons.

**AVAILABLE SOON**

Editorial position  
with your Favorite CWC  
Branch newsletter  
*The Write Way*

newsletter@writersofkern.com